

Holy Longings (1890)

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately exhorts believers to ardently long for holiness, persist in fervent prayer, and rely on God's grace to overcome sin and grow in Christlikeness.

Scripture: Psalm 119:131-133, Matthew 5:48, Romans 7:24, 2 Corinthians 12:10, Isaiah 40:31, Psalm 121:3, John 6:35

Topics: "Holiness", "Prayer", "Sanctification"

Description

In this 1890 devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon passionately calls believers to cultivate a deep, intense longing for holiness, modeled after the Psalmist's panting desire for God's commandments. He emphasizes the necessity of fervent prayer, reliance on divine grace, and an uncompromising fight against sin. Spurgeon encourages Christians to be spiritually dissatisfied with their current state as a motivation to pursue Christlikeness more earnestly. This sermon inspires a heartfelt commitment to sanctification through God's power.

Transcript

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

"I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments. Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name. Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." Psalm 119:131,132,133.

LAST Lord's-Day we spoke about being in the fear of God all the day long and I am afraid some thought, "The pastor has set a very high standard before us—not too high, but still far above what we have been able to reach." I know that many desires after holiness were excited and many longings of heart went up to Heaven. It ought to be so as soon as the Truth of God is received into the mind. Note the context—"The entrance of Your Word gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple." And then the next step is intensity of desire—"I opened my mouth and panted: for I longed for Your commandments."

When we have light enough to see what holiness is and how desirable it is, then we should hunger and thirst after it. To be holy is to go to the University—to have a desire for it is to go to a preparatory school for children—and to labor and agonize for it is to go to the grammar school. I want to teach the young children and get them ready for that grammar school, that their course may be clear for the University of actual holiness of life. I shall not take you to the grammar school of strong desire with the view of your stopping there, but that I may coach you up, by God's good Spirit, for the University of attainment where you will be

"in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

Here we have David desiring, praying, pleading and setting forth very clearly what he pants after. May you and I have the same burning desires. May we pant. May we thirst and at the same time may we clearly know what we are panting for, so that we may the more intelligently pursue it and thus go the nearest way to obtain it! May the Holy Spirit, the Author of holiness, help us in our meditations upon these three verses!

In the first verse you have the Psalmist longing intently after holiness—"I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments." In the next verse you have David pleading fervently for the thing that he desired, praying in this fashion, "Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name." In the third verse you have the same man of God enlarging intelligently upon what it was that he pleaded for, giving both the positive and the negative side of it—"Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

I. First, then, we will think of LONGING ARDENTLY AFTER HOLINESS—"I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments." Observe carefully that the man of God longed for the Lord's commandments. This cannot mean anything else than that he longed to know them, longed to keep them, longed to teach them, longed to bring all around him into obedience to them.

Many religious people long after the promises and they do well, but they must not forget to have an equal longing for the commandments. It is a sad sign when a man cannot bear to hear of the precepts, but must always have the preacher touching the string of privileges. To the renewed man it is a privilege to receive a command from the Lord whom he serves—and a great Grace to have the will and the power to obey it. To us Divine Grace means a power which sways us, as well as a favor which distinguishes us. To me the greatest privilege in all the world would be perfect holiness. If I had my choice of all the blessings I can conceive of, I would choose perfect conformity to the Lord Jesus, or, in one word, holiness.

I do not think I should have made Solomon's choice of "wisdom," unless it included wisdom of moral and spiritual character—and that is holiness. I said to a young girl the other day, "Are you perfect?" She answered that it was her greatest desire to be so, though she had not yet attained it. Just so. And that hallowed desire shows which way the heart

is going. No unrenewed heart ever sighed and cried after holiness! A mere passing wish is of but little worth—I am speaking of the intense and continual desire of the heart. We must strive after holiness with an agony of desire. Oh, to be rid of every sin! What is that but Heaven? Oh, to escape cleanly from every tendency to it and from every trace of it! This would be bliss. What more of happiness could we desire than to fulfill that Word of our Lord—"Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect"?

Are you conscious of great longings to escape from sin? Do you feel far less dread of Hell than of sin? Is sin the worst of hells to you? Is it horrible, terrible, killing? Would it be the heaviest punishment that could be laid upon you if the Great Judge should say, "You are filthy, be filthy still. You are unholy, be unholy still"? It would certainly be the worst of deaths to some of us! The deepest prayer of our hearts is to be delivered from that inbred sin which is tinder in which the sparks of temptation find fuel. We long to be delivered from that law in our members which brings us into captivity to sin. Oh, that we could be like He who said, "The prince of this world comes and has nothing in Me"! How wonderful! "Nothing in Me"!

Alas, the evil prince finds very much of his own in most of us. One of the best men I ever knew said, at 80 years of age, "I find the old man is not dead yet." Our old man is crucified but he is long a-dying. He is not

dead when we think he is. You may live to be very old, but you will have need, still, to watch against the carnal nature which remains even in the regenerate. I heard one speak about feeling angry when provoked and he said "he felt a bone of the old man moving." Alas, there is more than a bone of it in us—there is the whole body of this death still left—and very palpable, very substantial it does seem to be at times, so that we are forced to cry out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

We need deliverance, not from the bones of it, but from the very body of it which still plagues us. In those longings you see which way the stream of your heart is flowing. In these longings of your spirit you may fully observe the Divine commandments—these desires, I say, show that you have a clean heart and a right spirit—a heart which would do good, though evil is present within you. The tide is running in the right way, though the wind may be blowing against it. Being born of God, you do not commit sin as the tenor of your life, but you strive after that which is pure and good.

Now, observe that the Psalmist, having told us what he longed for, shows the strength of those desires, for he had been so eager in his pursuit of holiness that he had lost his breath. He could not find among men a good figure to describe himself and so he looked among animals and he selected the panting stag as his crest. The hart has been hunted over hill and dale. The dogs have long been close behind it. It has fled, as with the wings of a swift eagle, from their murderous teeth. For a moment it has eluded them. It pauses. It longs to bathe itself in the brook. It is hot, weary and thirsty and therefore opens its mouth wide.

See how it pants! Mark how its breast heaves and its whole body palpitates while it tries to regain its breath! The poor hunted thing is exhausted with its desperate efforts. Have not we, also, at times, felt spent in the struggle against sin? We have not yet resisted unto blood, but we have said to ourselves, "What more can we do? This fierce temptation returns—we may yet be overthrown by it. Oh, that we could take to ourselves wings and fly away! Woe is unto us, for we have no strength." You were like a man who is out of breath—you were striving beyond yourself after "life more abundantly."

Accursed is that man who has exhausted body and mind in the race of sin—from that curse he can only escape by looking to Jesus who was made a curse for us! But blessed is that man who has spent all the energy of his being in following after righteousness, for out of weakness he shall be made strong. When he cries, "My foot slips," the mercy of the Lord shall hold him up. When, like David in the battle with the giant, he waxes faint, the Lord shall cover his head. Meanwhile he opens his mouth and pants out his weariness—and the Lord is with him and He will preserve him alive. Are you ready to faint this morning? Underneath are the everlasting arms! He that faints in such a pursuit as this shall swoon away upon the bosom of his Lord. Be of good comfort.

See, next, how resolved he was. He says, "I opened my mouth, and panted." He is eager to go onward. Worn out by previous effort, he does not lie down to die but is determined to continue on the move. Give up the struggle? Never! My Brothers and Sisters, we have drawn the sword against the Canaanites of sin and we will never sheathe it until the last of them is slain! It may be a lifelong battle, but we will never make truce or treaty with sin. Woe unto him who says of holiness, "To here shall you come, but no further—and here shall your proud waves be stayed." We must never degrade

ourselves by saying, "This form of sin cannot be conquered, for it is constitutional—as it was bred in my bones it must be allowed to come out in my flesh." Brethren, we allow no excuse for ourselves. We will not plead for the life of a single sin—

"Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die;

My heart has so decreed!

Nor will I spare the guilty things

That made my Savior bleed."

Oh, for the holy fury of a sanctified iconoclast who will spare nothing which is opposed to God! We are called to break in pieces every idol, to cast down every grove and to overthrow every altar so that Jehovah may be God alone in the land. I charge you, never compromise with sin—abhor the idea of compromise with error and with evil. If you say, "I will only sin so far," you might as well say, "I will only take so much poison, or stab myself a few inches deep." Alas, you have given up the fight when you have come to terms with the foe! A hot temper may be natural, but it must be conquered! An obstinate spirit may be inborn, but it must be cast out! A proud mind may be a family heritage, but it must be laid low! Certain weeds may be indigenous to the soil of your Nature and therefore it may be doubly difficult to extirpate them, but the work must be done. Keep the hoe going—never cease from the determination to uproot the last of them! Even though you open your mouth and pant with weariness, yet keep your face set like a flint towards holiness and let your case be that of one who is "faint, yet pursuing."

Note that the follower after holiness seeks renewed strength. Why does he open his mouth and pant? Is it not to get more air, to fill his lungs again, to cool his blood and to be ready to renew his running? When you have an hour's retirement from the battle against sin, spend it in refurbishing your shield and sharpening your sword—for another assault will soon be upon you. We can become strong again. "He gives more Grace." We are never, for a moment, to suppose that we have exhausted the strength of God when we have exhausted our own. We ought to be all the more earnest to draw upon Divine all-sufficiency!

We are to be like that fabled giant whom Hercules could not overcome for a long while because he was a child of the earth—every time he was thrown down he touched his mother earth and rose with fresh strength. Hercules had to hold him aloft in his arms and there strangle him. Now, whenever you are thrown down and call upon your God in your faintness and weakness, you will find that He restores your soul—"To them that have no might He increases strength." When cast down we cry, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise." "When I am weak, then am I strong." May we realize the truth of that Christian paradox! Brethren, we can overcome sin in the power of the Lord!

The Canaanites have chariots of iron, but Christ has a rod of iron with which He can break them in pieces. Sin is strong, but Divine Grace is stronger. Satan is wise, but God is All-Wise. The Lord is on our side, therefore let us open our mouth wide and take in another draught of Heaven's reviving air! Let us bathe in the Water of Life! Let us drink from the smitten Rock and in thus waiting upon the Lord we shall renew our strength. Has He not said, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it"? When our desires are after the best things, we may expect the Lord to meet with us and grant us times of refreshing from His Presence. In remembrance of these visitations and the time of intense desire which preceded them, we can say, "I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments."

The Psalmist was dissatisfied with his attainments. Brethren, may we never be content with ourselves. We are satisfied with the Word of God. We are satisfied with the Gospel of God. We are satisfied with the favor of God. We are satisfied with the Christ of God. But we shall never be satisfied with our own

personal condition till we wake up in the likeness of the First-Born Son! Satisfaction with self is the death of progress! He that is not content with his place in the race will push forward. But he that is proud of his position in the running will soon flag and fall behind. Like the man on the bicycle, we must keep going—to stop is to drop. On! On! On! You are only safe as the wheel spins round and you throw the miles behind you.

My text is not the utterance of one who is sitting in his armchair with the motto on the wall behind him, "Rest and be thankful." As for the man who feels as the Psalmist did, his mind is far away in the land beyond him. His opened mouth and panting heart speak of desires which are not as yet fulfilled. Yet, let no tinge of discouragement mingle with your dissatisfaction—this man is hopeful of better things. He opens his mouth because he looks for something to fill it! He pants because he believes in brooks which will relieve his thirst. Wise men will only pant for that which it is possible to

attain. We are not Quixotical—we have set out on no romantic expedition. We do not shoot at the moon nor aim at an absurd ideal. We are not even rash like those who seek the North Pole and risk their lives for a dream.

Brothers and Sisters, God can make us holy! Few of us have any adequate idea of what we may become, even here, by Divine Grace. The possibilities of sanctification are seldom explored, but the mass of professors are content with small things in this direction. When a man asks me, "Can I be perfect?" and looks as if he would lead me into a debate upon the subject, I try to find out what manner of man he is before I answer him. If he is worldly, given to appetite, an angry man, a hard man, a proud man, or a lover of his own supremacy I smile at the question as coming from him. I picture to myself a man who slept under a hedge last night, whose pockets are full of emptiness, whose clothes would disgrace a rag bag, out at elbows and beggarly—and this gentleman wishes to discuss with me the question—"Is great wealth attainable by an ordinary working man?" I cannot see what the question has to do with him!

He of the rag bag says, "You know, Sir, we cannot all acquire 10,000 a year." "No, my dear fellow, it would seem that we cannot all save 10 pence, much less 10,000 a year. Had you not better get a pair of shoes for your feet before you talk about thousands? These are great words from a very little man." When you are not doing what you might do, why speculate about what is possible or impossible? When a man has not enough Divine Grace to make change for a sixpence, he may waive all question about the millions of spiritual perfection! Do you cry, "Can I be perfect"? I answer, leave that question until you are much further on the way to it than you are now. Do not be distressed by the fear that you may by accident become better than you should be!

I will insure against that calamity at a very low rate. Have faith in God and say, in His name, "If perfect holiness is possible, I will have it. If it can be reached on earth, I will reach it." All that the Spirit of God can make of such a poor sinner as I am, it is my desire that He should make. I gladly submit myself and all that I have to His gracious operation. Brothers and Sisters, do you not say the same? I would like to have a very dissatisfied congregation at this time—I wish that everybody here would go out of this Tabernacle grumbling at himself! I would like to hear each one say, "It will not do—I must get out of this! I must rise to a higher condition—I must be more Christ-like! I must have less and less of

self."

Brethren, may we be burning with an insatiable desire to be holy and may we say with the Inspired penman, "I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments."

II. Desire, where it is real, will soon embody itself in prayer. Therefore we find the Psalmist PLEADING

FERVENTLY FOR THE HOLINESS HE DESIRED. Here are his breathings: "Look You upon me, and be merciful

unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name." You see, dear Friends, he believes in God's power to bless him and therefore he turns to Him and cries, "Look You upon me." Is that all? Is a look sufficient? Listen to me and I will show you that there is much in a look. Is it not written, "Look unto Me, and be you saved"—that is our look to God! If our looking to God saves us, what will not God's looking at us do?

If there is so much power received by the eye of faith, how much will be given by the glance of love from God? Think not little of a look from God. A look—only a look! Yes, but it is from Him. Remember what a look from Christ did for Peter. He did but look on him and swearing Peter turned to weeping Peter in a moment! Great sinners may be grateful for a look, for it is more than they deserve. Great saints may rejoice in a look, for it means much when the eyes which look are the eyes of Omnipotent Love! "Look You upon me." The favor of God is a choice means of sanctification.

While affliction is greatly used of God to cleanse the heart, yet a very noble, soul-filling sense of the love of God is the truest sanctifier in the hands of the Holy Spirit. If you know that God loves you with an everlasting love, you will love the Lord and hate every false way. If you walk in the light of His Countenance, you will walk in the way of His commandments. If God's love is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, like sweet perfume, your life will be fragrant with it. It will become natural for you to please Him who loves you infinitely and immutably! Blessed is that man upon whom God looks—I mean, looks with an eye of favorable regard. Lord, look on me and say, by that look, "I have called you by your name, you are Mine," and this will cause me to keep in Your way! That is what the Psalmist is here praying for! The Lord can sanctify us with a look of love. His choice makes us choice—His love fills us with love.

Observe that the pleader appeals to mercy. Let me draw your attention to the text, "Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me." To be delivered from the power of sin is the greatest of mercies. Sin is a misery from which we can only be saved by mercy. "Be merciful unto me." We have no claim upon the Lord by way of merit—our appeal is to His

Sovereign Grace. We have no rights—these we forfeited by our treason against our King. We plead, as the courts say, "in forma pauperis," or as the poor man seeks help from pity.

Our appeal is ad misericordiam—to mercy and compassion. When you come before God in prayer, seeking sanctification, base your request upon His mercy—"Lord, You have done much for me. Do still more and make me holy. I have not profited by Your discipline as I ought to have done. Deal with me in patience. I am poor material for the potter's skill, but exercise Your long-suffering and bear with me and go on with Your work of Grace until You have made me a vessel fit for Your use." It is truest, wisest, safest for us to appeal to mercy. The best of saints are sinners, still, and sinners always need mercy.

Then he pleads as one who loves God. He asks God to deal with him, saying, "As you used to do unto those that love Your name"—implying that he is one of them. Come, dear Friends, are you of the number of the lovers of the Lord? Do you love God's name?—that is to say, His Character and His revealed will? "Yes, that I do," cries one, "God is my exceeding joy and I delight in His Law after the inward man. His holiness was once terrible to me, but now I admire it and delight in it. Oh, that I were a partaker of it to the

full!" You see the man's character by the way in which his heart takes its pleasure! If any man truly loves God he will grow like God. The revealed Character of God is, to some of us, a joy forever—and this is a sure mark of Divine Grace.

We are not what we ought to be. We are not what we want to be. We are not what we hope to be. We are not what we shall be—but we do love the name of the Lord—and this is the root of the matter. We shall be like He, for we love Him. Thus the very fact that the Lord has filled us with love to Himself is a plea for further Grace to keep His commandments. The Psalmist employs the grand plea of use and custom, for he says, "As You used to do unto those that love Your name." Use and custom generally have great weight in a court of law. A friend said to me, "How will such a suit go? The case has never been before a court until now?" I answered, "Are you sure that what was done is according to universal and long-continued custom? For, if so, though there is no law, the custom of the trade will stand."

Custom among men reaching far back holds good in court—how much shall the custom of the eternally unchanging God decide His future acts! The Psalmist pleads the Lord's own custom! And this is a grand plea with Him because He is unchanging. Whatever He has done He will do—and His having done it is a pledge that He will do it again—unless there is any declaration to the contrary. The Psalmist seems to say, "You are in the habit of helping those that love Your name. Lord, help me. It is the way of You to sanctify Your people. Lord, sanctify me! When saints desire to be holy, You are accustomed to grant their desires. Lord, grant mine, for I have the same desires!" Is not this a good plea—"Be merciful to me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name"? If you think it a good plea, urge it at the Throne!

This involves another fact—he joyfully accepts God's method. When you cry to God to help you in your overcoming of sin, you must consent that He shall do it in His own way. Now, if it is His will that sanctification should involve chastisement, are you willing to take it? "Oh, yes!" you say, "Lord, do unto me as You used to do unto those that love Your name. And if it is written, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,' Lord, rebuke and chasten me so long as You do but love me." We kiss the rod because the Father who uses it deigns to kiss us. We assent to the processes of Divine Grace that we may enjoy the results of Divine Grace. It may so happen that if God sanctifies you, He may have to grind you very small—cheerfully yield yourself to the mill!

If this is the way in which He deals with those that love His name, do not desire any different treatment. As the result, you may become a butt for the ridicule of ungodly men, but of this do not complain—for this has frequently happened unto those that love His name. God sanctifies His people, but not without their own effort in that direction—be willing to make the effort, too. Say, "Lord, I will breakfast with Your children, I will dine with Your children, I will sup with Your children and I will go to bed with Your children hoping to rise with Your children. Lord, take me into Your house and treat me not as a stranger or a guest, but as a child! I do not ask for the best bedroom, nor to have a special feast made for me—I would only share the daily bread of Your little ones.

"If You treat Your children so-and-so, treat me the same and I will be grateful. I do not ask to go to Heaven without enduring tribulation on the road. I would not pray to be exempted from the general description—'These are they that came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" We would not have less than the family of love and we cannot desire more! It is enough for a sheep to be fed with the flock, for a child to fare like the rest of the family. Do you see where we have come? Our prayer is that God would make us holy—

holy through His favor, holy through His own gracious working. But we leave methods in God's hands—let Him take His own way, His tried way, His ordinary way, His fixed way—only let Him deal mercifully with us as He used to do unto those that love His name.

Let no one of us demand exemption from the customary tests and trials—

"Must I be carried to the skies On flowery beds of ease While others fought to win the prize, And sailed through bloody seas?" Do you expect to be crowned without warfare? To be rewarded without labor? You expect what you will never have! Give up such idle dreams and plead the prayer of my text—"Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name."

III. I thank you for your deep attention—it is greatly helpful to me in my feeble state. Will you bear with me while I

conduct you to the third head, which is this—we see the Psalmist ENLARGING INTELLIGENTLY UPON THE

FAVOR HE SEEKS. It is a good thing to come before the Lord with a prepared prayer. "A prepared prayer!" cries one. "Would you have us write out our prayers and learn them?" I did not say, or even think of such a thing! But for a man to drop on his knees and to imagine that he can at once pray acceptably without a preparatory thought is for him to deceive himself.

The best prayer is when a man waits a little and considers, "What do I need? If I had an invitation to visit the Queen and was told that I might ask whatever I pleased of Her Majesty, I should prepare my request. If I wished to make the most of the interview, I should reflect and set my petition in order. I might ask amiss—I might ask for something inconsistent, or something unfit for royalty to bestow—I should therefore turn my prayer over. When you go before God, it is well to know what you are in need of. Our older Brethren used to say in prayer, "We would not rush into Your Presence as the unthinking horse rushes into battle." I suppose they would not, for, as a rule, they did not make much of a rush at anything! I do not wish to quote the old-fashioned remark so as to revive it, for I have often wished that the old horse had been put into an omnibus and worked to death. Horses are not expected to think and therefore the term, an unthinking horse, was needless! Still, there is something in what the expression meant—we must not go before God without thought and reverent preparedness of heart and mind.

Now, let us see how the Psalmist puts it. His cry is for holiness and he describes it as being ruled by the Word of God. "Order my steps in Your Word." The different sects have differing ideas of holiness, but the reality of holiness is only one. It is this—"Order my steps in Your Word." If we believe God's Word, we are orthodox. If we practice it we are holy. This Book is the great umpire as to conduct—not the changing moral sentiment of passing generations! Pray God to order your life according to His Word. To this Word we must be conformed. This is our copy to write by—this is the image to which we must be molded.

He would have holiness in every step of his life—"Order my steps in Your Word." It is not, "Lord, order my journey as a whole," but, "Order my steps." We lose a great deal by lumping things—in the matter of holiness detail is all-important. Brothers and Sisters, I would not only preach a holy sermon, but I desire that every word may be a holy word, every sentence a right sentence. As you believe in the verbal Inspiration of the Bible, so pray for verbal guidance in your speech and minute direction in your actions. The whole Book of Life will be excellent when every line and every letter is ordered according to the Word of the Lord. When we are careless as to the parts we spoil the whole.

Notice that he would have every step ordered. "Order my steps." We wish to put the right foot forward, but the right foot to move may not always be that which is called the right. The left foot may sometimes be the right and we must not take things for granted. We wish to put down our right foot in the right place, at the right time, with the right degree of force and turned in the right direction. A great deal of holiness depends upon order, punctuality and proportion. If order is not Heaven's first law, it is certainly one of its laws and proportion is another.

Some men's lives are out of perspective. Do you remember Hogarth's caricature of a picture without perspective wherein a man appears to be fishing in a river but is really standing far away from it? A sparrow in a tree looks like a huge eagle and a man on the top of a hill is borrowing a light from a candle held out of the window of a house down below on the other side of the river. Without perspective, good drawing is impossible—and without proportion a complete life is impossible. A man may be, in many points, a good man. You may say of him, bit by bit, "Yes, that is good

and that is good," and yet he may have so much of one virtue that it may become a vice—and he may have so little of another virtue that it may be a grave defect. We can never attain to the right proportion of the virtues unless the Lord Himself arranges them in order for us. O Lord, help us! Order our steps!

We remark that he would have every step full of God—he would have each one ordered of the Lord. He would receive his strength, his motives, his guiding influences direct from the Lord—"Order my steps in Your Word." Lord, when I put my foot down there, may it be at Your order. And when I move it to another place, may it still be at Your command. Whether here or there, may I only step where You appoint. Let me go nowhere apart from Your Divine guidance and command. "Well," cries one, "this is difficult." But, my Brother, although obedience may not be easy, it is free from the far greater difficulties which accompany self-will! A child who will do nothing but what his father commands does not find his course difficult—the difficulty comes in when he wants to follow his own will and to have his own way.

You cannot serve God and self! If you try it, the mixture is nauseous and injurious. Say, "Lord, I would consult You about everything I think, or say, or do, for then that which I do will not have to be undone—that which I say will not be wished unsaid—and that which I think will not have to be wept over. 'Order my steps in Your Word.' Put me under orders. Keep me under orders and never let me escape Your orders."

Observe that the last part of the verses is the negative way of describing holiness—"Let not any iniquity have dominion over me." He would be wholly delivered from the tyranny of sin. Many men are violent against one sin, but the true saint abhors all sin. You are a teetotaler. I am very glad to hear it—you will not allow the sin of drunkenness to have dominion over you. But are you selfish and ungenerous? Have you developed habits of strict economy in regard to religious donations so that you always give a penny where you ought to give a pound? What have you done? You have only changed your idols! You have dethroned one usurper to set up another! If you were once profane and are now hypocritical you have only changed iniquities!

It is a very curious thing how one sin feeds on another—the death of profligacy may be the resurrection of greed. The flight of pride may be the advent of shameless folly. The man who was lewd, riotous, brawling and irreligious has killed those sins—and on their graves he has sown a handful of a poisonous weed called pride—and it flourishes amazingly! It may be London pride, country pride, or English pride, or American pride—but it is rare stuff to grow—and to grow over the rotting carcasses of other sins. Unbelief

may dethrone superstition, but its own reign may be no real improvement upon that of credulity. If you only throw down Baal to set up Ashteroth, what progress have you made towards God? Little does it matter which of the false gods is set up in the temple of Jehovah—He hates them all! The right prayer is, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

Some sins are of respectable repute and other sins are disreputable among men. But to a child of God every sin is loathsome. Sins are all what Bunyan calls Diabolonians and not one of them must be suffered to live in the town of Man-Soul. "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me." I can see the throne set up within the heart of man. Who shall sit on it? It cannot be empty—who shall fill it? This sin, that sin, or the other? No, Lord, help me to keep every intruder out of it! Whether he come as an angel of light or in his true character as the devil, help me to treat every one as an enemy that would seek to supplant You in your dominion over me!

Oh, that God may reign over us from morn to eve, through every day of every week of every year! "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me," is a prayer against the reign of sin. Sin will attack us, but sin shall not subdue us, for it is written, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." You may put up "Trespassers, beware!" but the trespassers will come, do what you may. Still, they shall not be allowed to acquire a right of way through our Nature. If a bird flies over our head, we cannot help it—but we will not let it make its nest in our hair. So a temptation may pass by us, an evil imagination may flit over the mind, but we will not invite evil, nor patiently endure it, nor allow it to lodge in our souls! Our bosom's throne is for the King of kings, Jesus, the Bridegroom of our hearts! This is our prayer—"Let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

I fear that many professors have never understood this prayer. One man is a splendid man for a Prayer Meeting, a fine man for a Bible class—but at home he is a tyrant to his wife and children. Is not this a great evil under the sun? Another man is stern and honest and he inveighs with all his might against every form of evil—but he is hard, even to cruelty, with all who are in his power. One is generous and fervent, but he likes a sly drop. Another is good-natured and pleasant, but he puts it on in his bills at times and his customers do not find the goods quite of the quality they pay for. I

have known a man who would not work on the Sabbath, but then he never worked on the other six days—and another who never broke the Sabbath, but he broke many hearts by his unkindness. Beware of pet sins! If you let a golden god rule you, you will perish as well as if you let a mud god rule you. Be this your constant cry—"Let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

I have done when I say just this. I have been describing these longings, but I have only been taking you to that preparatory school of which I spoke at the commencement. Already some of you are saying, "I do not think I shall make a rapid scholar even at this preparatory school." The first thing you have to do is to see that you have these longings strong within you. If you have them, thank God for them. To pant and pine after holiness is infinitely better than to be self-righteous! Cultivate these desires and cravings. But, in the next place, never rest content with mere longings. He that really longs is not content to long—he desires to have his desire fulfilled. The only way to be holy—you that have not begun—is to go to a holy God through the holy Mediator!

Trust in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus and so be reconciled to God by Him who alone can put away sin. Then go again to Jesus and ask Him to renew you in the spirit of your mind and wash you with water from the power of sin, as He has washed you with blood from the guilt of it. When you are washed, take care that you keep your garments unspotted from the world. When you have once known the transforming

power of the Holy Spirit, do not return again to folly. Follow on watchfully and resolutely. Seek the daily renewing of the Holy Spirit and so shall you go from strength to strength till you shall be like your Lord and shall see Him as He is.

May God bless my feeble words and put power into them for your eternal good, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Psalm 119:119-136. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—42, 119 (SONG II), 119 (SONG III).

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